

**The Honorable Bob Etheridge**  
**Statement in support of H.R.4872**  
**The Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act of 2010**

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of health reform. I have said all along that there are several goals that our efforts must meet to improve security and stability for North Carolinians. We need to reform health insurance to reduce costs for people who have insurance and those who have been priced out of the market. We need to increase consumer choices and make sure that insurance companies do not deny coverage because of preexisting conditions or technicalities. We need to shore up Medicare to improve security for seniors, reducing costs for medications and eliminating copayments. We need to make insurance affordable for businesses, so that they are not faced with the choice of providing coverage for their employees or making payroll. Finally, we must put discipline back in the budget and bring down the budget deficit. I rise in support of H.R.4872, the Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act of 2010 and H.R. 3590, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act because together they meet these goals.

The working families of the Second District need solutions, not more fear, neither the real fears of rising cost nor the false fears spread by special interests. We cannot continue to allow the current system to kill jobs and bust the budgets of our families and our nation. After reading the legislation carefully, I have concluded that it will save lives and save money. This is the best chance we have to reduce sky-rocketing health care costs for North Carolina families.

North Carolinians know that the current system is broken and that we need common sense reform. For me, the effort to fix our health care system has always been about people not about politics. Our effort is about North Carolina families. We need reform for folks who are struggling with unbearable health care costs, rapidly rising premiums, bureaucratic meddling, and arbitrary denials of coverage and a system that is driving our nation deeper and deeper into debt.

Throughout this process, I have heard from thousands of folks from the main streets and country roads of North Carolina who are crying out for help. At numerous town hall meetings in North Carolina and over the telephone, as well as in other opportunities, I have spoken directly to North Carolinians. I read thousands of

messages that come in by phone, email, fax, or letter every day. The vast majority say that change is needed.

When North Carolina families are hurting, doing nothing really isn't an option for me. I have heard from thousands of my North Carolina neighbors who are suffering under the current system.

Folks like a nurse from Sanford, North Carolina, who says that insurance industry bureaucrats are keeping her from providing her patients the care they need.

Folks like a woman from Raleigh, who fears she will suffer the same fate as her sister who died from asthma because she could not get insurance coverage.

Folks like a man from Louisburg, who cannot start a new business because he needs the insurance his current employer provides. His mother pleaded with me that they are not looking for a handout, just a fair playing field.

Folks like a woman from Rocky Mount, who notes that the working poor, self-employed, part-time workers and others on the margins need relief. She called on me to not let the insurance companies win this time.

These are the real people that convinced me that voting for these bills is the right thing to do. A lot of folks are afraid, both of the current system and of potential changes. Thousands of families without insurance, and individuals with pre-existing conditions, are an illness away from financial ruin. Reform needs to provide them security.

Madam Speaker, as we continue to address America's financial situation, health reform is absolutely necessary to get our economy growing again. This bill will reduce the stranglehold that insurance costs have on our small businesses and eliminate the threat of bankruptcy due to medical costs that hangs over so many North Carolina families. It will strengthen our rural communities, supporting the training of doctors and providing incentives for them to work in underserved areas. And the bill is fully paid for, so that not only will it bring down costs for individuals and businesses, but for the taxpayer and future generations.

Madam Speaker, making sure every American has access to affordable health insurance and high-quality health care is one of the most important challenges of our time. If we can afford to provide health care to Iraqi citizens, as we have over the past decade, we can afford a fiscally responsible reform that puts health care in reach for all Americans. The health reform debate is about saving money and saving lives. At its core, health reform is all about ensuring that American families and businesses have more choices, benefit from more competition, and have greater control over their own health care, while bringing down costs for individuals, our families and businesses, and for the nation.

These bills are fiscally responsible and will improve the health and health care of people across my district, North Carolina, and the country. I am pleased to be able to vote in favor of this historic legislation.